

Preface

Small and medium-sized enterprises are important contributors to employment and inclusive economic growth around the globe, including in Southeast Asia. As one of the fastest growing regions in the world, Southeast Asia has broadly embraced a growth model based on international trade, foreign investment and integration into regional and global value chains. This approach opens up an important window of opportunity for SMEs, but it also means that they must increase their competitiveness if they are to survive and grow in a highly competitive marketplace.

With the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and the adoption of the broader inclusive development goals of the 2030 Agenda, policymakers in the region are progressively turning to SME development as a way to foster equitable economic growth and to narrow substantial income gaps between and within ASEAN Member States.

The OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme contributes to this effort by conducting policy analysis and training on SME development work in the areas of digitalisation, innovation, investment, global value chains, productivity, trade and greening the economy. The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) also conducts analytical work on SME development related to trade, investment, human resource development and infrastructure enhancement, among other topics.

This study, the ASEAN SME Policy Index 2018: Boosting Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, is the result of a collaboration between the OECD's Southeast Asia Regional Programme, ERIA and the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME), in partnership with the governments of the ten ASEAN Member States as well as experts, stakeholders and representatives of the SME sector. We are confident that it will be a valuable tool to map the depth and nature of SME policies across ASEAN and providing a framework for assessing and benchmarking progress in the design and implementation of SME policies. Aligned with the objectives of the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for SME Development 2016-2025, this framework also allows for an assessment of its implementation. The corresponding analysis is supplemented by policy recommendations at the regional and country levels, as well as good practice examples from ASEAN and OECD member countries. It builds on a similar exercise that was piloted by the OECD and ERIA in 2014.

We look forward to continuing this fruitful collaboration to enhance SME development as an important driver of growth, job creation and social cohesion in Southeast Asia.



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